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Disrupting the Digital Natives with Direct Mail

Generation Z has never known a world without technology. Known as digital natives, this up and coming generation of people born between 1997 and the early 2010s has always had the internet, social media, and mobile phones at their fingertips. With spending power of more than \$140 billion according to Business Insider, this audience is top of mind for businesses worldwide.

So how does direct mail disrupt the digital world these digital natives inhabit? Quite easily, actually.

Direct mail is cutting through the digital noise and providing a break from being chronically online. According to the U.S. Postal Service, 72% of Gen Z respondents are excited to discover

what the mail brings every day and would be disappointed to no longer receive mail. Additionally, 33% are inclined to make a purchase if they see it in the mail.

The reason for this enthusiasm? A study by Archival found that 74% of the Gen Z respondents say that experiences that happen “in real life” are more valuable than digital experiences. Members of Gen Z enjoy the more personal and tangible aspects of mail. The U.S. Postal Service found that the most effective elements in direct mail for this audience included thick paper stock, unique size or shape, and colorful images and/or text.

Even though Gen Zers are willing to take a break and enjoy the physical aspects of mail, there are some hurdles that marketers need to overcome when trying to engage with this audience. Their average attention span is only eight seconds—shorter than that of a goldfish! To grab and hold that attention, the piece has to lead with creativity. Digital additions such as QR codes to take them directly to the right webpage help link the physical world with the digital sphere.

With many of this generation coming of age during the Great Recession and experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic, they have a reputation for being thrifty. Coupons, discounts, and “Buy One

Get One” offers resonate with them. Additionally, they value experiences over possessions, so they are more likely to spend money on a brand that highlights an Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) proposition; a rewarding loyalty program; or an emphasis on community or buying local.

Personalization matters! Gen Zers respond best to messages that make them feel “seen”. The U.S. Postal Service also reports that personally addressing a mail piece increased its effectiveness. The image, copy, and offer have to resonate with their needs, interests, and values. They are more likely to trust their peers than slick sales tactics, so they appreciate authentic reviews from people they relate to. This audience is comfortable with multitasking, and marketing campaigns targeted to them should be doing the same. A multi-channel approach will reach the Gen Z audience across the channels they pay attention to, and mail fits nicely into that mix when combined with Informed Delivery, digital retargeting ads, and geotargeted digital ads that reach them while on the move.



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